REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 are pending in the above-identified application. Claims 1-3 are amended to correct minor informalities, and support for the amendments are apparent from Claims 1-3 themselves. Accordingly, no new matter has been introduced.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Tokunaga (U.S. Patent No. 6,473,996, hereinafter, "Tokunaga").

Before treating the rejection of Claims 1-3 as anticipated by Tokunaga, Applicants believe that a brief review of the present invention would be helpful.

An exemplary embodiment of the present invention is directed to a Front Opening Unified Pod ("FOUP") used to carry and store semiconductor wafers. Semiconductor wafers are very sensitive to contamination. Therefore, wafers are typically manufactured in a cleanroom environment, and devices such as the FOUP are designed to abate contamination of the areas around the wafer. In light of these requirements, the Applicants developed the present invention as recited, for example, in Claim 1, that provides a particular arrangement for the recited mini environmental portion.

Regarding the rejection of Claims 1-3 as anticipated by Tokunaga, that rejection is respectfully traversed by the present response. Claim 1 recites, in part:

> ...the clean box is fixed with a first clearance having a predetermined distance between the opening formed plane of the clean box and the outside surface of the part of the wall in which the first opening portion is formed.

In contrast, Tokunaga does not disclose a first clearance having a predetermined distance between the clean box and the wall as recited in Claim 1. Instead, as shown in Fig 4,

for example, the FOUP (30) makes contact with FIMS (40) via protuberances (23) of FOUP sealing surface (25).[1] Tokunaga, in col. 9, lines 16-24, states:

> When the protuberance 23 (having height H_2) provided on the FOUP sealing surface 25 **is brought into contact with the FIMS sealing surface 24**, the FOUP system 30 can be held in that position. Consequently, the FOUP sealing surface 25 can be accurately positioned on the FIMS sealing surface 24 by way of protuberance(s) 23. (Emphasis added).

Accordingly, there is no clearance between a FIMS sealing surface (24) and the FOUP sealing surface (25). That is, in the arrangement described in Tokunaga, the outside surface of the part of the wall in which the first opening portion is formed, is in contact with the opening formed plane of the FOUP (30).

In another embodiment shown in Tokunaga, Fig. 8, protuberance (22) is provided on the FIMS sealing surface (24), and protuberance (23) is provided on the FOUP sealing surface (25).[2] When the FOUP and FIMS are brought together, the protuberance (22) makes contact with FOUP sealing surface (25); and the protuberance (23) makes contact with the FIMS sealing surface (24). Therefore, as in the first embodiment, no clearance exists between the FOUP and FIMS. Rather, the FOUP and FIMS are in contact via the protuberances. Nowhere in Tokunaga is a first clearance having a predetermined distance between the clean box and the wall as recited in Claim 1 disclosed. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 1 patentably distinguishes over Tokunaga for at least the reasons discussed above.

As Claims 2 and 3 depend, directly or indirectly from Claim1, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 2 and 3 patentably distinguish over the cited reference for at least the same reasons as Claim 1.

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[1] Tokunaga, col. 9, lines 5-15.
[2] Tokunaga, col. 10, lines 35-62.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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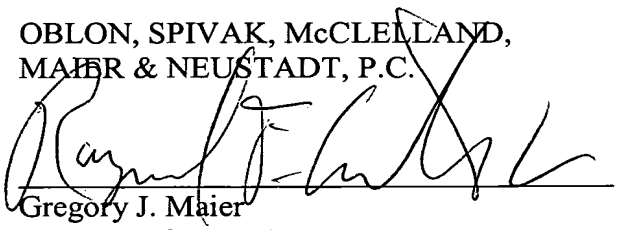

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